New Book On White House Published

NEW YORK (AP) — "Nothing was without controversy. The kitchen could not even make a peanut butter sandwich without making someone upset."

Letitia Baldrige, former social secretary to Mrs. John F. Kennedy, made this observation about her White House job in a happy autobiography, "Of Diamonds and Diplomats," published by Houghton Mifflin.

Books relating to Mrs. Kennedy are not without controversy. Yet Miss Baldrige, now a housewife, mother and director of her own Chicago public relations firm, is confident the former First Lady will have no objection to this one.

"She knows I would not be indiscreet," said Miss Baldrige. "Everything was already in the papers, but I told what lay behind."

"What lay behind," as she recollects sounds like a rollicking situation comedy with Lucille Ball and the Marx brothers. Some snippets, recounted by Miss Baldrige:

In her first (and last) news conference in Washington the Miami-born, Omaha-bred, Farmington - and - Vassar-educated former secretary to Clare Boothe Luce too fliply described her new boss as "a woman who has everything, including the President of the United States;"

—Deprecatingly referred to club women as "those vast hordes of females;

—Unwittingly jarred the traditionalists by giving the impression that Mrs. Kennedy would hang modern art in the Whit House;

—Haplessly did nothing to dispel a notion among the press that a feud existed between Mrs. Dwight Eisenhower and the new First Lady.

Soothed by the president's father Ambassador Joseph Kennedy, consoled by her own father, a veteran Republican congressman, and encouraged by Mrs. Kennedy, Miss Baldrige says she and her distaff staff nevertheless:

Angered the Women's Christian Temperance Union by setting up a bar at the first White House party, not realizing they were breaking a dry tradition and on Sunday at that.

Insulted a Catholic priest by mistakenly sending a form letter congratulating him on the birth of a son.

Nevertheless, the 337-page autobiography, of which 146 pages are about her job at 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, contains some colorful close-ups of the handsome Kennedy family in the White House.

There was the President's problem with classical music. To keep him from applauding at the wrong time, Miss Baldrige said she worked out a door opening system to signify the end of a number.

There was, she writes, Mrs. Kennedy's duel in chic with the Iranian Empress Farah who had brought all her royal jewels to a White House visit. The first Lady won the game by dressing with stark simplicity, jewel-less except for a few sparklers on her ears and in her hair.